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Conference Abstract

# Latin American Plea for Incorporation of Other, Non-English Languages in TDWG Standards Documentation

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## Abstract

Historically, some of the most successful biodiversity data sharing initiatives have been developed particularly in North America, Europe, and Australia. In parallel, and driven by necessity, tools, practices and standards were shared across othes communities. In the last decade, great efforts have been made by countries in other regions to join the biodiversity data network and share their data worldwide. Although knowledge, tools, and documentation are broadly distributed, language is the main constraint for their use, as most of it is only available in English. English may be the first most spoken language worldwide (Eberhard et al. 2020), but it is not native to most of the population, including a sizable proportion of the United States (Ryan 2013). For instance, Spanish is listed as the

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second most spoken native language worldwide, after Mandarin Chinese (Eberhard et al. 2020). While recognizing that English is currently considered the “universal language” for scientifically-related activities, it has been pointed out that a large proportion of biodiversity scientific knowledge is not produced in English, and that language constitutes a barrier to sharing knowledge (Amano et al. 2016). Actions to overcome this have been called for, for example by the 2nd Global Biodiversity Informatics Conference (GBIC2) in its list of ambitions for supporting international collaboration (Hobern et al. 2019), but are still largely missing in the broad community.

Language affects the understanding and use of biodiversity data standards and related documentation for all the community, both English and non-English speakers. Our findings in the Latin American region suggest that the availability of materials in other languages, namely Spanish and Portuguese, would greatly benefit the region and improve our involvement in biodiversity data sharing. Also, on the other hand, the English speaking community would benefit from better understanding knowledge in other non-English languages, allowing broader use of data from all regions. This work also constitutes a plea from the Latin American and the Spanish-speaking community at large to the Biodiversity Information Standards (TDWG) to explore and incorporate other languages, hence fostering understanding, and therefore widening the use of TDWG standards in our region. We provide a list of people supporting the petition as Supplementary Material (Suppl. material 1). In the petition we also identify people (more than 60% of the signatories) who are willing to contribute to translating TDWG resources into Spanish. There is no single, best mechanism to move this initiative forward, but the approaches of some other initiatives (e.g., the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) translators network) are being explored, weighing resources needed both from the volunteers and the management perspectives. We will present the different options for the community to evaluate and decide upon a suitable action plan.

## Keywords

biodiversity data standards, human diversity, Spanish, community

## Presenting author

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## Supplementary material

### Suppl. material 1: Signatories to the petition for incorporation of other languages to the Biodiversity Information Standards (TDWG) standards and documentation doi

**Authors:** Zermoglio PF, Plos A.
**Data type:** other
**Brief description:** Signatories to the petition for incorporation of other languages to the Biodiversity Information Standards (TDWG) standards and documentation, containing names, affiliations and country, as of 2020-07-2. All people listed have provided their consent to be on the list.
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